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ABSTRACT

This monograph examines the roles and responsibilities of and the relationship between the community college president and the board of trustees. First the monograph considers the political context of community college governance, identifying the external forces to which the president and board must jointly respond. The monograph then discusses various other aspects of college governance, including: (1) the state's role; (2) administrative areas determined partially by the state and partially by the board; (3) the nature of policy and its subdivisions--governing, executive, operating, and educational policy; (4) the roles of the board, president, deans, and students in policy-making; and (5) how the subdivisions of policy blend together. The next section discusses the board's role in governance, focusing on the various types of boards and how they receive their power; the "working board" compared to the "policy board"; board membership; common pitfalls; and the duties and powers of the board. The following section outlines the president's primary roles, specific duties, and responsibilities to the board. Finally, suggestions are presented for strengthening the board-president relationship. Board members are urged to respect the president's authority and the board's corporate nature and to develop policies that forestall crisis management. Presidents are warned about indecisiveness and the importance of timing and having the board's confidence. A bibliography is appended. (AYC)

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# CHALLENGE AND OPPORTUNITY

## The Board of Trustees, The President, and Their Relationship in Community College Governance

Robert A. Hall

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ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE TRUSTEES

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# CHALLENGE AND OPPORTUNITY

## The Board of Trustees, the President, and Their Relationship in Community College Governance

with

An Annotated Bibliography

by

Robert A. Hall

February, 1981

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## FORWORD

An effective educational institution provides a vehicle by which a community may grow and prosper. Essential to the development of an effective college is the creation and maintenance of a productive, stimulating relationship between the board of trustees and the college president.

An understanding of the roles and responsibilities of both trustees and presidents is vital if those entrusted with these important tasks are to develop a viable relationship. The author has examined carefully and thoughtfully these important roles and relationships and has concluded that far from being an onerous experience, the governance of a college can be an exciting, useful, and by all means, an adventuresome experience.

This monograph meets a need and is something which should be kept on hand and used. Not only is the text full of useful observations, the annotated bibliography contains valuable suggestions for further reading from among sources close to the problems of college governance.

It is my pleasure to suggest that this monograph, which is very well done, deals with a subject that requires the careful attention of all of us who are concerned with improving our community colleges. I am grateful to the author and to the Association of Community College Trustees for writing and publishing this monograph concerning such an important and challenging subject.

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## ABSTRACT

The public community college system operates within a complex political system which produces both internal and external pressures on college governance. The critical relationship within community college governance is the marriage-like partnership of the Board of Trustees and the college President. Key to the health of this relationship is a working understanding of the division of labor between policy decisions as a function of the Board of Trustees and administrative or implementation decisions which are the concern of the President.

Both the Board and the President are accountable for their decisions and actions, the former to the electorate or Governor, and the latter to the Board. Accountability and trust are two key concepts. Both depend upon critical evaluation which is the highest form of cooperation. The college presidency, like the Captain of a ship, is one of the few remaining callings where personal accountability is a way of life, is a special challenge, and leads to self-realization.

CHALLENGE AND OPPORTUNITY

The Board of Trustees, the President, and
Their Relationship in Community College Governance

## INTRODUCTION

The Community College System within the United States encompasses approximately 1044 public and 186 private two-year schools of higher education, each operating with a pattern of governance which with few exceptions involves a close relationship between a board of trustees and a chief executive officer most frequently known as a President.

The purpose of this monograph is to discuss the Board-Presidential relationship and to explore its importance to the community college system.

It has become almost a cliché within the literature to say that the relationship between a board and its college president is a delicate marriage of responsibilities, authority, and skills, influenced by a variety of internal and external pressures. The nature of the external pressures varies greatly depending on whether the college is publicly or privately supported. The internal pressures, i.e., those primarily involving the board, the president, the administrative staff, the faculty, and the students, are largely independent of the public or private nature of the college. Because the majority of community colleges are publicly supported and because this public support results in a wider variety of external influences on governance, this monograph will be confined to a discussion of the community college system in the public sector.

## POLITICAL ORIENTATION OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES

A community college, as all publicly supported institutions of higher education, operates within the political system. In order to understand the internal dynamics of community college governance, it is necessary to understand something about the wide variety of external forces to which the organization must respond.[1]

As public institutions, community colleges must be responsive to all levels of government, national, state, and local plus a wide variety of professional, licensing, and accrediting organizations which impact directly and indirectly upon the nature of the programs offered. Each of these government or private organizations impacting on community colleges vie with each other for power.

Among the great issues in higher education is how an individual college can maintain control over its own destiny when so many groups, especially government agencies such as state coordinating councils, superboards, legislatures, budget officers, governor's offices, and federal agencies, including now the new Department of Education, expand their controls under the rubrics

1. Richard C. Richardson, Jr., et al, Governance for the Two Year College, Prentice-Hall, inc., Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1972, p. 5.

of coordination, economy, and individual rights.[2]

The community college truly operates in the eye of the political storm. Figure 1 illustrates some of the governments, organizations, and groups that impact on community colleges.

Figure 1

THE EYE OF THE POLITICAL STORM

There are educational leaders who contend that the political process is not well understood or appreciated by many academic personnel especially administrators, faculties, and students. These groups have an inherent desire

2. John J. Corson quoted by Mary Lou Zoglin, Power and Politics in the Community College, ETC Publications, Palm Springs, Calif., 1976, p. 17.

to isolate themselves from the political process which brings them into immediate conflict with boards of trustees and other political leaders.[3]

As long as there is a desire for the benefits of public funding, i.e., higher salaries, better facilities, more financial assistance to students, etc., higher education must have those who understand that the political process "responds to economic and social forces" and that politics seeks to accommodate these forces through reasonable and ethical compromise.[4] How to enlist the positive forces of politics and to recognize and to defend against the negative forces are among the joint responsibilities of a college president and a board of trustees.

Some states operate higher educational systems in a more centralized fashion than others. The centralized states frequently place some sort of governing-coordinating board with an executive director or chancellor between the executive and legislative power and the individual college or college district board of trustees. Less centralized states operate their higher educational systems with largely autonomous boards over each institution or community college district. In both the centralized and decentralized systems the major decisions and the source of authority rests with the state governor and the legislature.[5]

Governors and their attitudes toward higher education have been studied. They exhibit a marked preference for permitting the institutional governing bodies to govern themselves. Educational policy at the gubernatorial level is largely a matter of the budget process. Historically governors have indicated less reluctance to defend educational budgets than budget requests from other state agencies such as welfare and roads. This propensity may change during the current period of retrenchment. Despite this apparent favorable attitude on the part of governors, many college presidents surveyed realize that without the active backing of state governors, their educational programs would be politically stymied.[6]

The state governors' influence on individual college programs is effected through shifting program priorities and budgetary allocations. Decisions by governors are based both on educational merit and upon his or her perception of an institution's political potency.[7] The broad support for a college's programs as indicated by the unified support of a prestigious board of trustees and by the support manifested in the community is a political reality that is hard for a governor to ignore. Boards as they represent the communities thus can assist state government in reaching educational decisions that are both desirable and politically feasible.

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3. John D. Millett, Politics and Higher Education, The University of Alabama Press, 1974, p. 142.
4. Millett, p. 143.
5. Millett, p. 62.
6. Gene A. Budig, ed., Perceptions in Public Higher Education, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1970, pp.109-115.
7. Richardson, et al, p. 23 as obtained from The Capitol and the Campus: State Responsibility for Postsecondary Education, New York: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1971, pp. 19-22.

Just as boards of trustees can politically influence power centers at State level, so too can they assist the college president in rallying community support behind a particular local educational issue or program. One of the tasks of a board is to counsel with the college president as to the local power structure which is always unique.[8]

## COMMUNITY COLLEGE GOVERNANCE

As previously discussed, state political decisions in the form of state laws establish the nature and intent of the two-year community college system. A major function of the state law is to specify the relationship of the community college system to the rest of the higher educational programs. Frequently, state law goes beyond specifying the intent or mission of the community college system to directing the organizational structure and procedural activities of boards, administrative units, faculty, and students.[9]

Among the issues which are determined in part by state law and in part by local board of trustee decisions are the following:

a) What services should the college perform to meet the general requirements of an educated citizenry?
b) Who will provide financial support and in what proportion of the total cost?
c) Should the Community College be an agent of social change or should it confine itself to the transmission of culture and the vocational preparation of students?
d) Who will determine the educational objectives of the college and what they will be?
e) How much flexibility is necessary for higher education to respond to changing social needs?
f) To whom will professionals be accountable for economy and effectiveness of educational programs?[10]

All of these issues are essentially policy questions which relate to the mission and intent of the Community College system. On the local level, the individual community college boards of trustees must determine, within the parameters of state law, how best their institutions can meet local needs.

To make the essential determination of a community college's mission, the board of trustees must call upon several elements within the college and the community for advice. This collation of many views, both professional and lay, illustrates the unusual nature of college and university governance.

Community College tables of organization usually appear hierarchical with neat lines of authority, responsibility, and function. Such organization tables reflect a similarity to those found in military organization, large business organizations, and government bureaucracy. As one author among many has pointed out however, this is but a surface similarity. In fact, each of

8. Richardson, et al, p. 40.
9. Richardson, et al, p. 19.
10. Richardson, et al, p. 7.

the major community college organizational groups, the trustees, the administration, the faculty, and the students has responsibilities to the others and must communicate and cooperate with the others. In short, the relationship, to function properly, must be more democratic than hierarchical or autocratic. Such a democratic relationship is necessary because of the largely voluntary nature of a college enterprise.[11]

According to H. L. Mason, there are essentially three concepts of authority which vie for supremacy in American colleges and universities: 1) authority based upon the "public trust" concept and exercised by the lay governing board; 2) the bureaucratic or hierarchical authority vested in the administration by delegation from the governing board; and 3) the authority of the faculty based on the theory that they should determine educational policy as well as practice.[12]

These three concepts of authority reflect the dilemma of college governance in determining the necessary distinctions between what is "policy" and what is "administration". By arriving at a satisfactory understanding of these distinctions, the various sources of authority can determine a mutually satisfactory division of labor which will usefully serve the institution. The answer to this dilemma must be determined for each individual college, however, some general guidelines can be drawn from the literature.

In writing about effective trusteeship, J. L. Zwingler avoids making a distinction between "policy" and "administration" and adopts rather a suggestion by Bogue and Riggs which subdivides policy into three distinctive areas each under the primary cognizance of one of the major groups in college governance. These policy subdivisions are:

Governing Policy - Those policies of mission and program and general operating conditions which are set by the Board of Trustees.

Executive Policy - Those policies of fiscal, facility, and personnel management established by the President in response to governing policy.

Operating Policy - Those policies of work environment and expectation set by Deans and Directors of activities in response to executive policy.[13]

Added to these three levels of policy might be a fourth which would be distinct from, yet related to, the other three levels of policy. This fourth

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11. S. V. Martorana, College Boards of Trustees, Washington, D.C.: The Center for Applied Research in Education, 1963, pp. 90-91.
12. Mary Lou Zoglin, Power and Politics in the Community College, ETC Publications, Palm Springs, Calif. 1976, p. 9, quoting from H. L. Mason, College and University Government, New Orleans Tulane University, 1972, pp. 4-5.
13. J. L. Zwingle, Effective Trusteeship, Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges, 1975, p. 6, quoting from E. G. Bogue and R. O. Riggs, "Institutional Policy and Its Abuses", Journal of Higher Education, Vol. 45, No. 5, May 1974.

subdivision of policy might be:

Educational Policy - Those policies related to curriculum, academic standards, instruction, tenure, and evaluation which is the expectation of the faculty.

The one remaining group which often seeks to participate in governance yet is the most difficult to accommodate are the students. Students, especially in community colleges, are frequently seen as lacking in commitment primarily because of their transient nature and their overriding vocational concerns. No one doubts that students have an interest in college policy yet rarely has a satisfactory method been established whereby this interest can be translated into effective action. The results thus have been that student opinion is expressed by the most vocal, the most special-interest motivated, or the most politically active. Unless the issues are of such importance as to reach even the most apathetic students, trustees and administrators are hardpressed to know if expressed student opinion is actually representative. As a result, student opinion is more something considered by trustees, administrators, and faculty than actually being a direct input into policy.

Having considered three and possibly four subdivisions of policy and the roles played by each interest group, it is time to discuss how these policy subdivisions are blended together to produce an effective institution.

This blending of policy requirements has frequently been known as an exercise in collegiality. Some boards of trustees have sought to codify collegiality within policy manuals and other policy statements. Such efforts have infrequently succeeded since collegiality is more a state of mind based upon trust and communication than a method for decision making. As one experienced trustee has written, "Principles and mechanisms notwithstanding, the relationship between a board and college president [and other staff and faculty (author's addition)] is a dynamic human interaction. As such, great care must be taken to create and enhance an atmosphere of trust."[14] Mr. Jablon evidently believes, however, that too much collegiality might be detrimental when he adds, "At the same time, a board has a special trust, a fiduciary trust, to protect the public interest. If for some reason that public trust is being abused by maladministration of the college, then the board has to remember its primary responsibility."[15]

Having discussed the general nature of policy and its subdivisions, it is now time to discuss in more detail the position, duties, and relationships of the two principle actors in community college governance, the board of trustees and the president. The prime responsibility of the board and the president is to serve the public in such a manner that public confidence in the college is maintained. This is no easy matter in an era of rapid and far reaching change. The public is confused by change and has no precise

14. Howard Jablon, "Boards and Presidents: How to Work Together, or Getting Your Feet on the Ground", Trustee Quarterly, Vol. 3, No. 1, Winter 1978-79, Association of Community College Trustees, p. 21.
15. Jablon, p. 21.

solutions to today's problems. Rather it turns to the leadership of the board of trustees and the college president to lead the way and plan for the orderly resolution of the community's higher educational problems.

## THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

"The function of a board is not to run the college properly, but to see that the college is run properly."

- Anonymous Board Member -[16]

This piece of wisdom concisely states the proper role for the members of boards of trustees, regents, governors, or overseers, as they are variously known.

As one scholar has put it, "The colleges are part of the shadow government of the United States; they have status, duties, and freedom..."[17] Likewise the governing boards of colleges participate in the political area if not also in partisan politics. The boards by their very nature, however, tend to provide some separation of the college and its professional staff and faculty from the uncertainties of partisan politics. Trustee and author Mary Lou Zoglin describes this political yet protective function of boards when she writes, perhaps the board alone is in a position to establish "some kind of balance or equilibrium between the needs of the social system which supports the institution and the needs of the individuals within the institution."[18]

As political institutions, boards receive their power and authority in three different ways: 1) As Constitutional Boards whose origins are in the State constitutions; 2) As Incorporated Boards having been created as corporate bodies and given certain powers under the state incorporation laws; and 3) As Statutory Boards created by and obtaining their authority from a special enactment of a State legislature.[19] These various types of boards are usually found to be for public state universities, private colleges and universities, and public community colleges, respectively.

In addition to their source of authority, boards are frequently categorized by their scope, function, and authority for decision making. Three general categories of boards are as follows:

Governing Board - A board which is legally charged with the direct control and operation of a single institutional unit or district.

Coordinating Board - A board which is legally responsible for organizing, regulating, or otherwise bringing together the overall policies or functions (or both) in areas such as planning, budgeting, and programing; but does not have authority to govern institutions.

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16. Janet M. Baird, "The Tools of Boardsmanship," Trustee Quarterly, Vol. 2, No. 1, Winter 1977-78, p. 4, Association of Community College Trustees.
17. S. V. Martorana, p. 13.
18. Zoglin, p. 165.
19. S. V. Martorana, p. 23.

Governing-Coordinating Board - A board having legal responsibility for functioning both as a coordinating board and a governing board for two or more institutional units which offer programs that have common elements.[20]

There are, in addition, other types of boards in higher educations which have state level authority for such matters as accrediting, certifying, advising, etc. but which do not either govern or coordinate individual institutions.

In community college governance all these board types exert an influence; however, the governing and governing-coordinating boards have the most relevance to the topic of board-presidential relationships.

Like most institutions at this time, community college governing boards suffer from unrealizable expectations of the public. The public credits such boards with far more influence and power than they possess. Appeals are made to the board to solve problems beyond their authority. Additionally some groups demand reforms and political action by boards which are totally unrelated to their function or powers such as "stopping wars, halting atmospheric pollution, and ending man's inhumanity to man."[21]

Impossibilities aside, there are basically two approaches to a board's work. These are the "working board" and the "policy board" approaches. These two approaches to board governance are not mutually exclusive yet they have significant implications for board-presidential relationships.

The "working board" approach means that the board wishes to participate in the major decisions and have a detailed involvement in the affairs of the institution. This is perhaps the most common and appropriate board mode for a community college. For a good board-presidential relationship to exist it is necessary for a good information exchange to take place. A part of this communications network must be everpresent evaluation and forthrightness by both the board and the president. Without such honesty the board is apt to stray into the president's realm of administration or the president may take hold of policy.[22]

The "policy board" concept, more common with large universities, involves board members in evaluation, criticism, and support of the administration. The president is relatively more concerned with faculty relations than he is with board relations.

The membership on community college boards of trustees usually varies from about five to fifteen members. They normally are elected; but in some states are appointed by the governor. People stand for community college trustee election for a variety of reasons. An amazing percentage have had some connection with the field of education, especially through relatives

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20. S. V. Martorana, p. 15.
21. Zoglin, p. 24.
22. Mary Lou Zoglin, "Boards and Presidents: Friends or Enemies", Trustee Quarterly, Vol. 1, No. 4, Fall 1977, pp. 25-32, Association of Community College Trustees.

who were employed by various school systems. Most members, however, can be classified as laymen. They bring to these positions attitudes which shape their judgment on issues. One author has classified board members according to motivation as follows:

a) Clients - They protect the student.
b) Guardians - They protect the taxpayer's dollar.
c) Benefactors - They offer their services out of a sense of noblesse oblige.
d) Politicians - They are enroute to higher office.
e) Mavericks - They sometimes do not seem to know why they are there.[23]

Just as trustees may be influenced by past family experience, so too many of them are associated with various special constituencies such as faculty unions, business groups, civil rights organizations, etc. Where possible, efforts must be made by board chairmen and presidents to persuade these committed members to take a broader view in the best interest of the college. The hope is that trustees will downplay their partisan alignment to their special constituencies and work for the good of the whole institution.[24] Partisans are a great danger to a president's effectiveness because the college is not the center of their interest as it normally is with the president. Such trustees and the president are not on the same wavelength.

A phenomenon of the last fifteen years has been the election or appointment to boards of more "representative" people who are only beginning to understand the uses and consequences of power. These new members have replaced more traditional trustees who being more familiar with power in their business lives were more inclined to use their trustee power with greater discretion. The message to college presidents should be to pay particular attention to the education and orientation of such new members so that they may quickly gain maturity and self-restraint and avoid the excesses of unfamiliar power.[25]

The strength of boards of trustees lies in their layman's status and in their evolving statesmanship. To have presidents and faculty members serving as voting members would result in serious conflicts of interest. The lack of voting professional representation on boards must not result in a shortage of professional input to board decision making. Most scholars and board members writing on the subject agree that boards should meet with the president in attendance and have him or her propose the agenda. Faculty viewpoints can be provided through the president as well as through faculty presentations to the board and by the use of board advisory committees with faculty membership.

Trustees cannot abrogate all concern over curricular matters; however, they cannot delve into the details of such matters without overstepping their

23. Zoglin, Power and Politics..., pp. 56-57.
24. Clifton R. Wharton, Jr., "The Stewardship of Trustees and the President", Guidebook for New Community College Trustees, Illinois Community College Trustees Association, Springfield, IL, 1974, p. 51.
25. August W. Eberle, "Role of the Trustee", Guidebook for New Community College Trustees, Illinois Community College Trustees Association, Springfield, IL, 1974, p. 6.

policy bounds and entering the realm of the administration and faculty.[26]

Having mentioned several do's and don'ts of board membership and discussed many of the characteristics and motivations of members, it is time to discuss some of the board's duties. These duties vary in detail but in general are as outlined by the New York State Regents Advisory Committee on Educational Leadership:

a) A Board is legally responsible for assuring that its college fulfills the distinctive purposes for which it was established.

b) A Board must understand and approve the kind of educational program offered and ascertain that it maintains the highest quality possible.

c) A Board selects, counsels with, and supports the President, relying on him for leadership in educational planning, and assists him in that leadership.

d) A Board promotes understanding and cooperation between society and the college.

e) A Board oversees the acquisition and investment of funds and the management of facilities.[27]

Other authors list various additional duties. Among the more important additional duties are:

a) A Board is responsible for evaluation to determine success and correctness of policies and their implementation.

b) A Board has a semi-judicial function as the final arbitrator of internal college disputes.[28]

Boards have complete power over college affairs. In practice, however, boards delegate much of their authority to the professional members of the academic community. Through delegation the finer points of policy are established by the president and his staff and by the faculty. In such a way, the routine management functions become the task of the administration and the faculty.

Having delegated a large portion of its authority, the board retains two major powers, the power to evaluate programs, performance, and individuals, and the power to withdraw any authority previously delegated.[29] It is through these two powers that boards retain control over their institutions.

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26. Gerald P. Burns, Trustees in Higher Education-Their Functions and Coordination, Independent College Funds of America, Inc., 1966, pp. 98-99.
27. Richardson, et al., p. 48.
28. Zoglin, Power and Politics..., pp. 71-92
29. S. V. Martorana, p. 59.

Since delegation is the only feasible method for board operation, it is a necessity that the board have absolute confidence in the person chosen to head the college administration. Thus the selection of a president as a board's chief executive officer is among the board's most critical decisions. Once a board has selected a president and persuaded him or her to accept the appointment, a board should have "no further executive functions."[30]

Through their evaluation powers, boards demonstrate their interest in the institution. Boards develop a working relationship with their college president and determine a mutually satisfactory level of policy decision review. Through this review and evaluation process, boards ascertain the health of their institutions. Presidents must not expect their board to agree with every decision and action that he or she makes; however, too frequent rejection of presidential actions by the board would be cause for a president to seek a vote of confidence or resign. Boards which are not supportive of their president cast doubt on their own judgment concerning presidential selection. Supportive boards can be very helpful to a president not only by sustaining him or her concerning difficult decisions but by protecting the president from the vicissitudes of the community. This protective role of boards helps assure the vitally important freedom of the institution.[31]

Just as the institution must be protected from inappropriate community pressures, so the community must come to understand and appreciate the college's mission. Without community appreciation a college will ultimately fail. Perhaps in no other function does the board and president share a greater joint responsibility than in establishing and maintaining sound public relations. Here it is not meant the public relations of the flack; but rather a demonstration to the community that the institution meets community needs. Community colleges as tax supported institutions must serve and be perceived as serving the needs of the community.[32] A board as a leadership force in a community must see that the institution is not whipsawed between conflicting and whimsical community perceptions of need.

Closely related to public relations and perceptions in the finest sense is a board's duty to maintain a suitable sense of direction and balance in institutional offerings useful to the community. It must exert this responsibility while maintaining great care that the faculty's right to academic freedom is not impaired. Such responsibilities require the wisdom of Solomon if the institution is to attract and retain quality faculty.

Perhaps the one power that a board is least likely to delegate is its control over budget and finance. This, of course, ties directly into its power to tax with the resultant potential for community hostility. To assist the president, a board should provide for the hiring of an expert

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30. S. V. Martorana, p. 77, quoting from Raymond H. Hughes, "College and University Trustees and Their Responsibilities", The Educational Record, XXVI, 1945.
31. Burns, p. 132.
32. Burns, p. 20.

financial manager to serve as the chief business officer. With the expert advice of the financial manager, the president must present the board with well conceived financial proposals. In no area can a president lose board confidence faster than in the area of financial management. At the same time the president must maintain ascendency over the financial manager or risk having educational decisions controlled by a board-financial manager coalition.

The duty which provides a kind of unity to a board of trustees' work is its evaluation responsibility. A board must evaluate both its own work and the work of its agent, the president. For the board it is not enough to await the verdict of the electorate. The voters lack sufficient specificity of understanding to make a critical evaluation that is useful except in the broadest sense. A board should, with the help of selected professionals as consultants, and through self-evaluation, analyze its own efforts.

In the case of the president, the board should evaluate him or her against a set of standards agreed upon during the selection process and mutually expanded during the president's tenure. The following six major areas of administration are important to understand when evaluating a president's work: 1) Formulating objectives; 2) Establishing programs; 3) Staffing; 4) Acquiring physical facilities and equipment; 5) Budgeting; and 6) Interpreting the institution.[33]

One president has written, "I strongly feel and highly recommend that my fellow presidents expose themselves by making themselves available for periodic evaluation. Nothing short of an honest and constructive criticism can make an individual polish up those qualities which he or she may own.... It is also important for trustees to develop the ability to separate facts from fiction and gossip from truth."[34]

Trustees thus have great legal authority much of which they delegate to the president. With authority in our system of government goes accountability. The board-presidential relationship to be successful should be noted for an easy sharing of responsibility and an equally willing desire on the part of all parties to account for their decisions and actions.

Having discussed the role of the board of trustees in college governance it is now appropriate to discuss governance from the point of view of the president.

## THE PRESIDENT

The president's primary role is leadership, leadership of the administrative staff, leadership of the faculty, and perhaps more subtly leadership of the board of trustees. A president must deal with people. He or she must work with all of the internal constituencies of a college and in addition represent the college to numerous external groups who have an interest in the

33. S. V. Martorana, p. 79.
34. Hushang Bahar, "Presidential Evaluation", Trustee Quarterly, Vol. 3, No. 4, Fall 1979, Association of Community College Trustees, pp. 1-5.

college, i.e., alumni, parents, donors, legislators, accrediting agencies, supervisory bodies, professional associations, unions, and just friends of the institution.[35]

The president is in fact the spokesman for the college yet is responsible to the board of trustees. Just as the board of trustees must delegate authority to the president, so, in turn, he or she must further delegate that authority to other administrators and faculty. Most students of college administration seem to agree that a wise president will decentralize his or her administration in such a way as to involve the greatest number of qualified people. A secure president will exert a persuasive influence over all the groups internal and external to the college yet will not feel the necessity to master every detail, to initiate every action, or to attend every meeting.

A president must think, act, and care. As Louis Benezet explains, a president must think clearly about all major issues facing his or her institution; he or she must act decisively, for action is the crux of the office; and he or she must care deeply because ultimately the president is responsible to the board of trustees for the entire institution.[36]

As previously has been discussed, the president serves as the executive officer to the board of trustees. As such, presidents implement the policies approved by the board. A president is more than the servant of the board. It is true that a president serves only at the board's pleasure; however, a president is hired to bring professional expertise to the board. Put another way, a president is only effective if he or she gives honest and necessary advice to a board which then acts upon it.

As one president has put it, "a college president is responsible for keeping one step ahead of the board as it develops its thinking regarding the college. The college administrator cannot just sit back and accept the educational thinking of the board. It is the responsibility of the president to be a leader in educational thinking for the community and to pass this thinking on to the board."[37]

Educational leadership is a special brand. The successful president quickly discovers that he or she cannot rely on the autocratic prerogatives of the office. Rather, the educational leader must exert the "powers of suggestion, logic, persuasion, and influence."[38]

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35. Burns, pp. 51-52.
36. Louis T. Benezet, "The Office of the President", Gerald P. Burns, ed., Administrators in Higher Education, New York: Harper and Row, 1962, p. 108.
37. Eric J. Bradner, "The Role of the Community College President", Board-President Relationships, Ann Arbor: The Midwest Community College Leadership Council, 1967, p. 5.
38. Merk Hobson, in the introduction to Perceptions in Public Higher Education, Gene A. Budig, ed., Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, p. ix.

As a president influences, so must he or she be influenced. Perhaps one of the best qualities that a president can possess to maintain harmony with the board of trustees and to be a team player is to maintain a "flexibility of mind and a readiness to be convinced" without becoming passively subordinate.[39] Perhaps the best measure of good governance in a college is the "amount of mutual influence, cooperative effort and shared initiative between a president and a board."[40]

Presidents have a wide variety of specific duties. Frequently these duties are formally listed in an organization and policy manual approved by the board of trustees. The following are among some of the more important duties delegated to the President of the Kansas City Kansas Community College:

1) Serve as the executive officer of the board.
2) Direct and supervise the details of instruction and professional development of the faculty.
3) Recommend all instructional staff and other employees.
4) Suspend students and recommend to the board students for expulsion.
5) Adjust all grievances or refer parties to the board.
6) Attend all board meetings and provide views and opinions.
7) Authorize the use of college facilities by college and approved community groups.
8) Determine with the assistance of administrators and faculty the textbooks, materials, and curricula to be used.
9) Make a district budget for board approval.
10) Prepare reports as required by law or board policy.
11) Represent the college at professional meetings.[41]

To achieve the maximum amount of administrative initiative, a president should utilize his or her powers as executive to the board to prepare the board's agenda and supporting documents and recommendations. Board members are more than willing to delegate their authority, however, they must be led by an administrator who is able to separate the important from the trivial. By streamlining the agenda and providing facts, analysis, and recommended action a president can assist the board to act with dispatch and maintain sufficient time and energy to consider important policy matters in a relaxed and confident manner.[42] The military calls this "completed staff work".

One of the agenda items to be considered by a board of trustees will be the annual budget. The budget is basically a financial plan for future programs and should be the president's responsibility for preparation. Some writers suggest that the budget be accompanied by a long range development

39. Robert E. Lahti, "An Administrator's Role in Higher Education", Board-President Relationships, pp. 51-54.
40. Burns, p. 82.
41. Organization and Policies Manual, Board of Trustees, Kansas City Kansas Community College, pp. 6-9.
42. John A. Haas, "Defining the Role of Trustee", Board-President Relationships, Ann Arbor: The Midwest Community College Leadership Council, 1967, pp. 19-22.

plan which would permit a board the opportunity to put the proposed budget in perspective. The areas of long range planning and budgeting offer significant opportunities for board-staff-faculty creative cooperation.[43] Such cooperation, however, must be based upon financial openness throughout the year.

Perhaps one of the best examples of a president's leadership is his or her ability to coordinate board policy with the faculty. Boards are responsible for the educational programs of the college yet being laymen, they delve into curricular matters at some risk and with some reluctance. Boards therefore expect presidents to assist them with the preparation of policies and regulations concerning the faculty and the curriculum. Such activities provide the opportunity for the president to organize advisory committees with faculty participation to develop such policies and to educate board members about faculty concerns.

The president along with the chairman of the board bears a responsibility to orient new board members to the history, tradition, aims, and goals of the college. Included in such orientation sessions should be discussions of the organization and administration of the institution as well as the problems and potentialities of the college. While the aim should not be to propagandize, such orientations help the new members to focus on their new responsibilities and develop their own perspective.[44]

Although a president occupies a distinctive and prestigious office his or her success is measured by the ability to mobilize and coordinate the diverse talents of the institution. It has been impossible to discuss the position of president without reference to the many others who share in the work. It is now appropriate to focus on the specifics of the relationship between the board of trustees and the president which make for institutional strength or weakness.

## THE BOARD-PRESIDENTIAL RELATIONSHIP

> "Because accountability is the prime responsibility of the college president, the relationship between the president and the board is of prime importance."[45]

It has become almost a cliché to say that the responsibility of the board is policy and the responsibility of the president is administration. It is never that simple at the top of the pyramid.

At the top, agenda questions become a matter of gray as opposed to black and white. Perhaps an acceptable definition to separate policy from administration is "whether a proposed action will change the nature or direction of the institution or its subordinate structure. If it will, the board should recognize the implications for long-term policy before casting their vote."[46]

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43. S. V. Martorana, p. 86.
44. Burns, pp. 70-72.
45. Joseph P. Cosand, "The Community College in a New Period of Change", AGB Reports, Vol. 17, No. 9, NOV/DEC, 1975, p. 8.
46. Stephen K. Bailey, Vice-President of the American Council on Education, to J. L. Zwingle, p. 6.

Likewise a president who has the opportunity to make a decision alone which would change the major course of the institution should refrain from such a decision and bring the matter to the board. On such decisions to refer or not refer are based trust or suspicion.

Having determined a generally acceptable definition of policy and administration, the practical effect rests with how the parties act. Care must be taken to insure that the conditions are not created which will result in the usurpation of administrative authority. Those boards which create executive and standing committees invite misunderstandings with their presidents.[47] Such committees seem to place emphasis on action rather than deliberation. Action is normally the realm of administration while deliberation is of policy.

Where administrative action is necessary, one method to develop a presidential proposal would be to convene an advisory committee composed of faculty, administrators, students, and perhaps alumni, and invite board observation. Such a method would achieve the necessary participation conducive to policy acceptance without violating either the board's or the president's prerogatives.

Board committees tend to violate the corporate nature of a board. Individual trustees or even groups of trustees less than the whole are normally without authority. Individually, trustees bring certain expertise to the institution which can be of immense help to a president but should be accepted only in an advisory capacity. Likewise, individual trustees should not encourage faculty or students to bring their problems to them directly since the appearance and the reality would be to bypass both the president and the chairman of the board. Nothing in these cautions should constrain the individual trustees from becoming widely acquainted on campus.[48]

The work of boards, assisted by presidents, is to develop policies which will meet most occasions and situations. If conscientiously done, such policy development will reduce the requirement for frequent crisis management. Crisis management weakens the institution by making possible ill considered actions. The current propensity to "take it to the top" stems both from deliberate tactics to weaken bureaucratic organizations[49] and from a tendency by administrators to cling to modes of behavior that coincide with public stereotypes.

One of the ways an administrator gets into trouble is to be trapped by indecisiveness. Frequently this is the result of a failure to properly delegate authority and thus forces issues to the top where a board's information is less than necessary for a good decision, and a board's power probably is greater than the significance of the issue. A president, and through him, the administration must be authorized to exercise genuine authority.[50]

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47. Eberle, pp. 5-10.
48. Burns, pp. 35-36.
49. Wharton, p. 51.
50. S. V. Martorana, p. 78.

Presidents by nature tend to be innovative while boards often are conservative. Both act on each other, usually to good result. One of the skills of a president is to understand the importance of timing and community attitudes. The most innovative proposals offered to a board at the wrong time will weaken a board's credibility if adopted. Too frequent experiences of this nature will undermine a board's willingness to consider innovative solutions to problems and will ultimately destroy the board-presidential relationship.[51] As in politics, timing is everything.

The board-presidential relationship can stand disagreements and split votes so long as factions do not develop and the splits continue to be based on honest open disagreements on specific issues. A prospective president should insist on knowing the attitudes of all board members participating in the decision to invite him or her to accept the presidency. If a new president does not possess the confidence of all members of the board at the beginning of his or her appointment, there is little right to expect it later on contentious issues.[52]

Accountability and trust are the two key concepts in the board-presidential relationship. They are nourished by the president who shares information with the board "concisely, thoroughly, and honestly"[53] and by the board who reciprocates with honest appraisal. No less than a president should seek to develop a board, a board should seek to nurture and encourage a president. Emil Koch, an outspoken trustee and veterinarian offers several suggestions as to how a board can better "care for and feed" its president. Among his ideas are these:

1) Don't spoon feed the President.
2) The board must function as a board.
3) Make policy.
4) Don't throw cold water on his ideas.
5) Allow him some mistakes.
6) Be fair.
7) Treat him as a mature human being.
8) Choose a leader for Board Chairman.[54]

Despite the appearance of a cliché, the board-presidential relationship continues to be compared to a marriage. It begins with enthusiasm. sometimes cools with familiarity, but hopefully matures and is strengthened by adversity, experience, and success. Like a marriage, it is helpful to keep communications open and review the bidding from time to time. Unlike a marriage, it probably should not be for life. Reasonable change is beneficial for both the individual and the institution.

It has been said that the college or university presidency is a hazardous and often frustrating experience.[55] This is true of many occupations

51. Richardson, et al., p. 134.
52. Cosand, p. 8.
53. Zoglin, Power and Politics..., p. 60.
54. Emil L. Koch, "How to Care for and Feed a College President", Community College Review, Vol. 1, No. 4, Winter 1974, pp. 47-50.
55. Burns, pp. 147-148.

which rely on personal accountability for their strength. The President like the Captain is responsible and accountable for his or her omissions and commissions, there being little or no thought given to the circumstances or the parts played by subordinates. The challenge is what makes such positions attractive and why there will continue to be men and women who seek to be tested. Without the challenge there is little opportunity for self-realization. Boards have the opportunity to create an environment which can advance the cause of learning. What more of a challenge is there in this world?

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